A Fairy Tale from before Fairy Tales: Egbert of Liège's "De puella a lupellis seruata" and the Medieval Background of "Little Red Riding Hood"

By Jan M. Ziolkowski

> All knowledge is partial, and the scholarship devoted to "Little Red Riding Hood" demonstrates this again and again.
>
> — Alan Dundes[1]

One vivid description of folktale research, still applicable although more than a half century old, reads, "Folktale study is like a desert journey, where the only landmarks are the bleached bones of earlier theories."[2] Because theories have proven to be so ephemeral in comparison with the tales themselves (although which are more entertaining remains debatable), it might seem prudent to place more stock in the tales and less in the theories or at least to take an eclectic approach toward theorizing so as to hedge bets; but not all scholars of folktales exercise more circumspection now than their predecessors did fifty years ago. For example, in *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook* Alan Dundes — one of the most prominent American folklorists of our day — adduces no material dated from before 1697 that is related to the tale "Little Red Riding Hood" but manages nonetheless to question sharply the very notion of valuing early written evidence. By scrutinizing a short Latin poem written in the first quarter of the eleventh century, I hope to refute Dundes's dismissal of literary evidence and to underscore the pertinence of studying medieval literature in coming to grips with that beautiful and elusive phenomenon to which English-speakers give the name "fairy tale."

The doubts about literary remains that Professor Dundes voices are deeply

I thank Joseph Harris for his many informative comments on a preliminary version of this paper, Michael Putnam for pointing out Vergil's *formido,* my father for helping me to follow the thread of Goethe, Gregory Nagy for an idea about mice, and the two *Speculum* readers, Brady B. Gilleland and an anonymous reader, for their thoughtful responses to the submitted draft.

[1] "Interpreting 'Little Red Riding Hood' Psychoanalytically," in Alan Dundes, ed., *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook* (Madison, Wis., 1989), pp. 192–236 (here: p. 192).

[2] Emma Emily Kiefer, *Albert Wesselski and Recent Folktale Theories,* Indiana University Publications: Folklore Series 3 (Bloomington, 1947), p. 9 (quoting Reidar Th. Christiansen, who in turn was quoting Arthur Bonus).

entrenched in folkloristics.[3] Since its inception as an independent field of study, folklore studies have commonly been the battleground of two factions.[4] One faction comprises literary folklorists, who have focused on folklore in — and through — literature. The other is composed of anthropological folklorists, who have been committed to studying folklore in its cultural context. Fortunately, the lines between the two factions have never been absolute, and prominent members of both have made reasonable proclamations about the need for cooperation; but the distinctions between the two show no signs of disappearing, and it seems that few literary or anthropological folklorists can forbear claiming primacy for their disciplines and materials in attaining a true understanding of folklore.

There is an irony in the fact that the doubts about the value of literary evidence in folkloristics received their fullest and most enduring articulation in the writings of the so-called Finnish School, practitioners of which "seek to reconstruct the history of a tale by tracing, collecting and categorizing all its variants,"[5] for the most illustrious representative in America of the Finnish historical-geographical method in folktale analysis[6] has been Stith Thompson, who received his graduate training from one of the foremost early literary folklorists and who himself advocated careful study of the mutual influence between written and oral tradition.[7]

Although to many people in this postmodern age the very project of reconstruction has become suspect, the reconstructive ambitions of the Finnish School trouble me far less than the prejudice against written evidence that it has sometimes encouraged: "all scholars admit some transmission by literature and some by oral variants, but different ones set the proportionate amounts of oral and literary influence at different levels. The Finnish School . . . give[s] the preponderant influence to oral tradition."[8] As a folklorist trained by Stith Thompson stated the case with specific reference to fairy tale, "The goal of the Finnish method of research is to discover the complete life-history of a *Märchen.* As a working hypothesis, its workers assume that

[3] For a brief history with reference to the Brothers Grimm, see Rolf Hagen, "Perraults Märchen und die Brüder Grimm," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 74 (1955), 392–410 (here: pp. 392–93).

[4] For a detailed account of the conflict between literary and anthropological folklorists in the United States, see Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt, *American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988). For a consideration of the divisions between literary and folklore studies with considerable attention to the Middle Ages, see Bruce A. Rosenberg, *Folklore and Literature: Rival Siblings* (Knoxville, 1991).

[5] The quotation is drawn from Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* (Austin, 1979), p. 21.

[6] The classic exposition of the Finnish School's methods is Kaarle Krohn, *Folklore Methodology Formulated by Julius Krohn and Expanded by Nordic Researchers,* trans. Roger L. Welsch, Publications of the American Folklore Society: Bibliographical and Special Series 21 (Austin, 1971).

[7] For a concise biography of his education and intellectual development, see Zumwalt, *American Folklore Scholarship,* pp. 55–60. For his advocacy of balance in attention to the written and the oral, see Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (1946; repr. Berkeley, 1977), p. 442.

[8] Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories,* p. 80 (where she contrasts the Finnish School and Carl Wilhelm von Sydow with Wesselski and Jan De Vries).

most motifs originally belonged to particular *Märchen* and then passed over into others. To find this *Urmärchen,* they study very many variants of the oral tale. They hold certain literary documents to be superfluous, such as those the oral sources of which are preserved and those which are copies, translations, or reworkings of older documents."[9] As will be seen, in the hands of some scholars the first recordings of the oral sources are even permitted to postdate by centuries the literary documents to which they relate and which they eclipse.

The preference of the Finnish School for oral over literary has not won universal applause among folklorists in either the Old World or the New, but the dissent has taken the form of sporadic guerilla warfare by individual scholars rather than systematic opposition by a well-defined "school." In the first half of this century the most forceful objections emanated from Albert Wesselski, who challenged proponents of the Finnish method "to abandon their practice of examining oral variants of a not far distant past time and to find and examine old documents. He assert[ed] that many of their apparently successful studies would, under such a test, have resulted in failure."[10] Wesselski remains an estimable figure, both for his energetic reconnoitering of medieval evidence and for his lucid framing of commonsensical objections to the Finnish method; but his quixotic quest was doomed, in part because it began at a time when the role of literary scholars in the field of folkloristics was dwindling. Now that ever fewer literary scholars define themselves as traditional philologists and ever more as literary critics or theoreticians, Wesselski's views are ever less likely to attract a responsive audience.

Since Wesselski, relatively few philologists have taken an interest in the squabble; and among the much more numerous literary historians and critics peace has been bought cheaply by begging the question. For example, Jack Zipes, the most prolific of Anglophone (or Anglograph!) literary critics to write on fairy tale, circumvents the controversy by differentiating between folktale as oral and fairy tale as literary. Three quotations illustrate his solution. First, whereas folktale "has its roots in the experience and fantasy of primitive peoples who cultivated the tale in an oral tradition," the literary fairy tale "has assumed a variety of distinct and unique forms since the late Middle Ages."[11] Second, "Just a superficial glance back into history will tell us that fairy tales have been in existence as *oral folk tales* for thousands of years and first became what we call *literary fairy tales* toward the end of the seventeenth century."[12] And third, "Clearly, fairy tale refers to the *literary* production of tales *adapted* by bourgeois or aristocratic writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries . . . and the nature of the author's social class, which must be studied in detail, added a new dimension to the folk tale as it was transformed into the fairy tale."[13] Zipes's distinction between

[9] Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories,* p. 18.
[10] Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories,* p. 45.
[11] Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell,* p. ix.
[12] Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell,* p. 2.
[13] Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell,* p. 23.

folktale and fairy tale condemns medieval texts to a limbo, since they are too early to qualify as literary fairy tales but too literary to pass as oral.

Is it productive for folklorists and literary scholars alike to develop rationales for disregarding each other's materials and findings, the one group because they deem the evidence superfluous, the other because they scorn it as being primitive? Despite being an old chestnut, the question of the relation between oral and written forms must remain alive, just as ever new formulas for a modus vivendi between the students of oral folklore and philology must be devised; for oral folklore and literary production are often interdependent, as are the scholars who have expertise in these two fields of study.[14] To these issues we will return after wandering through the primeval — or, rather, *medieval* — forest in search of "Little Red Riding Hood" and the wolf.

The main early records for "Little Red Riding Hood" come in two literary versions. The first is "Le petit chaperon rouge" by Charles Perrault (1628–1703), published in 1697 under his son's name (P. D'Armancour, who was then only ten) in a book entitled *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* and subtitled *Contes de ma Mère l'Oye;* the second is "Rotkäppchen," published in 1812 by the Brothers Grimm in the first volume of the first edition of their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*KHM*). Of less value to folklorists is Ludwig Tieck's (1773–1853) drama *Tragödie vom Leben und Tod des kleinen Rotkäppchens* (1800).

What weight should we attach to these works of literature as versions of "Little Red Riding Hood"? Alan Dundes leaves no room for doubt that he prefers oral over written versions. Indeed, in his foreword he criticizes even Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson for their failures to set proper priorities in this regard. According to him, they relied too heavily in their typing of the tale upon Perrault and Grimm without attending to "*authentic oral versions* of the tale which reveal important details not contained in either Perrault's or the Grimms' accounts."[15] He adds, "One of the aims of the present casebook is to demonstrate the nature of the oral folktale from which the Perrault and Grimm versions of the story surely derive." In an essay later in the casebook Dundes solidifies his position: "It is well to keep in mind that fairy tales are first and foremost an *oral* form. So from that point of view, any written version is suspect."[16] His avowed goal is "to illustrate the pitfalls of relying too heavily upon literary, derivative, and bowdlerized renderings of what are wrongly believed to be authentic folktales by considering the case of 'Little Red Riding Hood' (AT 333)."[17]

As these proclamations indicate, Dundes assumes a nearly automatic equivalence: oral versions of fairy tales are presumed to be authentic, written ones inauthentic. Does this sort of extremism lead to a greater understanding of

[14] See Linda Dégh, "What Did the Grimm Brothers Give to and Take from the Folk," in James M. McGlathery, ed., *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale* (Urbana and Chicago, 1988), pp. 66–90 (here: p. 71), and Carl Wilhelm von Sydow, "Folktale Studies and Philology: Some Points of View," in Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), pp. 219–42.

[15] Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook,* p. ix (my italics).

[16] Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook,* p. 196.

[17] Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook,* p. 197. The "AT" number is a reference to the Aarne-Thompson work cited below, n. 51.

"Little Red Riding Hood" — or of any other tale, for that matter? In the current state of scholarship no one would contend that any extant early literary version of "Little Red Riding Hood" represents an accurate transcription of an oral tale; no one would dispute Dundes's contention that Perrault's tale is a "highly stylized literary retelling";[18] and no one would maintain any longer that the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* can be considered unadulterated folklore, as they once were. In the case of "Little Red Cap" ("Rotkäppchen"), the Brothers Grimm, far from being protoscientists of folklore, reworked a tale that they received from tellers who were anything but illiterate, culturally isolated German peasants. Their informants were Jeanette (Johanna Isabella) and Marie Hassenpflug, highly educated members of a Huguenot family who knew and used stories by Perrault. Jeanette (1791–1860) was twenty-one years old in the fall of 1812, when she provided Wilhelm with a version based on recollection of the Perrault tale. Her older sister Marie (1788–1856) gave them another version, this one believed to have been based on French oral tradition, which was published as a supplement to the first version in the first edition. Yet we can accept restrictions on the proximity of both Perrault and Grimm to oral tradition without needing to deny that both literary versions derive many characteristics from tales that had circulated for centuries before being written down: a folktale does not cease to be a folktale merely because it has been transferred and adapted from an oral to a written medium.[19] In describing the relationship of these tales, we are not confined to a harsh dichotomy between literary and oral. As one early commentator on the German *Volksmärchen* summed up, "Das Verhältnis von Literatur und Volksmärchen ist kein einseitiges Abhängigkeitsverhältnis."[20] Since the invention of writing, there has been no hard and fast line between oral and written: folklore has filtered in and out of literature, literature in and out of folklore.[21] Consequently, under many circumstances — and especially under circumstances that involve the multifarious transitional texts and cultures of the Middle Ages — literary historians must work with folklore, folklorists with literature.

[18] Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook,* p. 3. Most would accept the view that the French writer adapted a preexistent tale that was current in French oral tradition, although some would contend that he fabricated "Little Red Riding Hood" entirely: Carole Hanks and D. T. Hanks, Jr., "Perrault's 'Little Red Riding Hood': Victim of the Revisers," *Children's Literature* 7 (1978), 68–77 (here: p. 77, n. 2).

[19] If one accepts that the repertoire of stories among middle-class storytellers derived from centuries of lower-class storytellers, then the fact that the Grimms' informants were middle-class and literate becomes less problematic. See Heinz Rölleke, ed., *Kinder- und Hausmärchen: Ausgabe letzter Hand mit den Originalanmerkungen der Brüder Grimm,* 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1980), 3:602. This acceptance has been challenged by John Ellis, *One Fairy Story Too Many: The Brothers Grimm and Their Tales* (Chicago, 1983), pp. 107–8; defended by Donald Ward, "New Misconceptions about Old Folktales: The Brothers Grimm," in McGlathery, *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale,* pp. 91–100; and restated by Heinz Rölleke, "New Results of Research on *Grimms' Fairy Tales,*" in McGlathery, *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale,* pp. 101–11 (here: p. 106).

[20] Lutz Mackensen, "Märchen," in Wilhelm Peßler, ed., *Handbuch der deutschen Volkskunde,* 2 (Potsdam, n.d.), p. 320. Compare Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories,* p. 18: "They keep reminding themselves, too, that an oral tale may be a literary variant returned to the folk mouth."

[21] See most recently Rosenberg, *Folklore and Literature: Rival Siblings.*

Before adopting any general policy, we must evaluate carefully the minutiae of the particular tale under examination.[22] Because whatever versions we have at our disposal will have their special textures, the proof in any individual case will be in the pudding — or in the telling. As a matter of policy students of the folktale cannot afford the luxury of bigotry against chronologically far-removed written versions any more than against the records of geographically distant cultures. Just because the ethnographic standards of another time or place differ from our own, we do not need to reject every record produced by that time or place. Granted, we have no direct access to the storytellers of older times. This concession does not mean that we should discount what we do have that is written. Rather, it suggests that we should handle it with proper care.[23]

A middle position that embraces the utility of older written evidence runs counter to the vintage Finnish-School method as it has been refined by Dundes: "In order to understand just how atypical both the Perrault and the Grimm versions of 'Little Red Riding Hood' really are, in comparison with the original folktale from which they surely derive, one needs to have two important sets of data. First, it is critical to have some idea of what the original oral tale was like. Second, one should be aware of the fact that a probable cognate of the tale is widely distributed in China, Japan, and Korea. It is sad to report that most of the scholars who have written at length about 'Little Red Riding Hood' were not in possession of these two crucial data sets. For the most part, the vital information was known to only a few specialists in folktale studies."[24]

Dundes's procedure leads to a readily apparent circularity. As the first "set of data" Dundes urges us to consider what the original tale was like. But since he dismisses the versions in Perrault and Grimm as unreliable, and since he does not acknowledge the existence of written records for an earlier version, he has no choice but to reconstruct the original tale on the basis of two bodies of much later material. One corpus comprises late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century French versions, especially an 1885 version that folklorists tend somewhat anachronistically to revere as the ancestor of Perrault's seventeenth-century tale.[25] The other encompasses the non-European ma-

[22] This was much the position taken by Walter Anderson: see Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories*, pp. 33 and 62.

[23] The approach recommended here differs little from that enunciated by Lawrence W. Levine, "How to Interpret American Folklore Historically," in Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Handbook of American Folklore* (Bloomington, 1983), pp. 338–44.

[24] Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook*, p. 13. Dundes looks like an adherent of the Finnish School in the early part of the century: "Anderson accuses Wesselski of not having exhausted even the well-known and now available Asiatic material, and of having completely ignored the oral transmission from Asia," in Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories*, p. 62.

[25] See Hanks and Hanks, "Perrault's 'Little Red Riding Hood,'" pp. 76–77, n. 2, where they voice a doubt that an oral text collected as recently as 1885 could possibly be considered the ancestor of Perrault's seventeenth-century tale. The 1885 version, recorded in Nièvre, is entitled "Conte de la mère grande," in Paul Delarue, *Le conte populaire français*, 1 (Paris, 1957), pp. 373–374.

terial to which he refers as his second "set of data" — material which is *both* chronologically and geographically distant from Perrault and Grimm.

After presenting abbreviated summaries of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean traditions, Dundes concludes that "it should be obvious that the Perrault literary reworking of AT 333 is far from being the most typical version of the tale type."[26] But if one's scope is European, and there is no reason not to have a Eurocentric scope in this case, since not even Dundes has argued that Perrault worked within a Chinese, Japanese, or Korean tradition, then perhaps the Perrault tale becomes more typical of "Little Red Riding Hood" as the average Westerner knows it. Indeed, if we opt not to exclude evidence from an older European context, we can find a piece of neglected evidence that helps clarify otherwise baffling aspects of Perrault and Grimm. In so doing we can follow, although not in the sense in which it was intended, the directive with which Dundes caps his introduction: "In future studies of this or other folktales, the reader may realize the importance of consulting all available versions of the tale rather than unnecessarily and arbitrarily limiting the scope of investigation to one or two standard literary versions no matter how important the intellectual niche such literary versions may occupy in Western civilization."[27] All available evidence should include, besides standard literary versions, not just oral versions but also nonstandard literary versions — literary versions that have been overlooked or accorded insufficient attention.

Since the Finnish School acquired ascendancy in folktale analysis early in this century, common wisdom has held that no traces of "Little Red Riding Hood" survive from before Perrault. In an authoritative study of Perrault that appeared in 1968, Marc Soriano asserted categorically: "Cette fois, aucune hésitation possible: le texte que nous étudions vient en droite ligne de la littérature orale. Il n'a jamais affleuré avant 1697 au niveau de la littérature écrite."[28] In a more recent appraisal of Perrault's sources, Jeanne Morgan betrays equal certainty on this score: "*Le Petit Chaperon rouge* has no known sources or parallels whatsoever. We have only Perrault's word for it that they are indeed 'Contes du temps passé,' in the Preface's allusion to stories 'que nos aïeux ont inventés.'"[29] The complete gap in early literary evidence is all the more surprising in view of the widespread conviction that the number of independent oral folktales with the main elements of "Little Red Riding Hood" attests to a thriving oral tradition in France, probably long before Perrault's version.[30]

In spite of the common wisdom, there is a parallel that was known to philologists more than a hundred years ago, that was even dubbed "Roth-

[26] Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook,* p. 202.

[27] Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook,* p. xi.

[28] Marc Soriano, *Les contes de Perrault: Culture savante et traditions populaires* (Paris, 1968), p. 148.

[29] Jeanne Morgan, *Perrault's Morals for Moderns,* American University Series II, Romance Languages and Literatures 28 (New York, 1985), p. 103.

[30] Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook,* p. 3; Jack Zipes, *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood: Versions of the Tale in Sociocultural Context* (South Hadley, Mass., 1983), p. 6.

käppchen und die jungen Wölfe" by its first and only editor,[31] and that was quoted in toto in the authoritative source study of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* that was published in 1913.[32] But the extent of its relevance was never fully appreciated. Whether or not all readers will concur that these few Latin verses are even remotely akin to the later versions that were foundational in written literature, probably most will be astonished that they have not received even passing mention or bibliographic citation in any English-language scholarship on "Little Red Riding Hood" over the past half century.[33]

The Latin verses appear within an extensive poem entitled *Fecunda ratis* (*The Richly Laden Ship*). This verse schoolbook was created between 1022 and 1024 by Egbert of Liège. A teacher of the trivium at the cathedral school of Liège, Egbert composed the *Fecunda ratis* for his pupils, dividing its 2,373 unrhymed hexameter verses into two books, which in a paroxysm of schoolmasterly inspiration he entitled the *Prora* (*Prow* or *Bow*) and the *Puppis* (*Poopdeck* or *Afterdeck*). Just as all of creation was loaded two by two onto Noah's ark, so the fundamental elements of learning were supposedly conveyed in the intellectual microcosm of the *Fecunda ratis*.

The *Prora* encompasses five sections: a prologue (1.1–4), one concatenation of one-line proverbs and sententiae (1.5–596), another of two-line proverbs and sententiae (1.597–1004), an epilogue (1.1005–8), and a medley (added in a second redaction) of longer pieces of fable, satire, and admonition (1.1009–1768). Whereas the *Prora* has a pedagogic bias, the *Puppis* is largely catechistic, with the accent on moral instruction (2.1–605). Although the *Fecunda ratis* is extant in only one manuscript (Cologne, Erzbischöfliche Diözesanbibliothek, Dombibliothek codex 196, eleventh century, fols. 1r–63r), the sorts of glosses with which it was outfitted by two of the twelve scribes who participated in its production presuppose that it was employed in schooling.[34] Egbert probably envisaged it as an early-eleventh-century competitor for two of the standard primers in the basic school syllabus, namely, the *Distichs* of Cato and the fables of Romulus or Avian.[35]

The *Fecunda ratis* has been called "a treasure trove for students of medieval folklore";[36] for although Egbert drew extensively upon the Bible and patristic writings, he also relied heavily on the rich oral traditions that circulated in his region, a border zone between Germanic and Romance language and

[31] Egbert of Liège, *Fecunda ratis*, ed. Ernst Voigt (Halle a.S., 1889), p. 268.

[32] Johannes Bolte and Georg Polívka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1913–32), 1:236 and 4:128.

[33] Even in French scholarship the Latin poem has not received notice since Paul Delarue, "Les contes merveilleux de Perrault et la tradition populaire: I. Le petit chaperon rouge," *Bulletin folklorique d'Ile-de-France* (1951), pp. 221–28, 251–60, 283–91, and (1953), pp. 511–17 (here: p. 227).

[34] The glosses are not all authorial: *Fecunda ratis*, ed. Voigt, pp. vii–viii.

[35] On these three works and the school syllabus, see Günter Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter: Entstehung und Wandlungen des Lektürekanons bis 1200 nach den Quellen dargestellt*, Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 5 (Munich, 1970).

[36] Elaine Golden Robison, "Egbert of Liège," in Joseph R. Strayer, ed., *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 4 (New York, 1984), p. 399.

culture groups. In it he incorporated many Latin translations of vernacular proverbs.[37] Because many of the proverbs originated among the uneducated countryfolk, Sigebert of Gembloux (ca. 1030–1112) referred to the poem as a book "metrico stilo de enigmatibus rusticanis" ("in metrical style about the sayings of peasants").[38]

In dedicating the poem to his erstwhile schoolmate Bishop Adalbold of Utrecht (ca. 970–1026), Egbert discussed his sources in oral tradition and set forth his pedagogic purpose in exploiting them. As one passage in this dedication makes apparent, Egbert saw oral tradition as a precious resource in teaching because it was at once familiar from everyday speech in the native language and yet novel when written in the learned language:[39]

> In communi enim sermone multi sepe multa loquuntur, et plurimis ad usum necessariis exemplis illa uulgi sententia profertur; quod quidem hausi, mecum id reputans, quod in his plurima uersarentur utilia, et si aliquatenus retineri possent perspicua, quę, quoniam nusquam scripta fuissent, quo magis memori pectore seruarentur, indiligentes propterea facerent auditores. Unde ego, quę comminisci per horas interdiu noctuque potui, singulis ea uersiculis, sepe duobus, interdum tribus, uti in ordine scriptos uidebis, mandans, pręterea nouis atque uulgaribus fabellis aliquot diuinisque paucis interserens, in duobus tantum coaceruaui libellis.
>
> In common speech many people often say many things, and that popular wisdom is expressed in numerous exempla, which are essential to use; I drew upon this material, in the belief that numerous useful things are found in it, and if in some way the clear insights could be retained, they would make neglectful students into attentive listeners (since they had been written down nowhere, they would be preserved in a more mindful heart). For this reason I gathered into only two little books those things, which I was able to recall over many hours by day and night, committing them to single verses, often to two verses, sometimes to three — as you will see, written in order of length — moreover interlarding some new and popular stories with a few theological matters.

Egbert's rationale for resorting to oral tradition resembles that of ancient grammarians and rhetoricians who commented upon the importance of fables in elementary education.[40] To cite an author who is unlikely to have been known to Egbert but whose views are typical of the school tradition,

[37] The proverbs have received fullest treatment in Samuel Singer, *Sprichwörter des Mittelalters,* 1 (Bern, 1944), pp. 65–142.

[38] See *Catalogus Sigeberti Gemblacensis monachi de viris illustribus* 147.947–50, ed. Robert Witte, Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters 1 (Bern and Frankfurt/M., 1974), p. 93. Because *aenigma* is nearly synonymous with *prouerbium* and *parabola,* the title as a whole is roughly equivalent to the later *Li proverbes au vilain,* on which see Eckhard Rattunde, *Li proverbes au vilain: Untersuchungen zur romanischen Spruchdichtung des Mittelalters,* Studia Romanica 11 (Heidelberg, 1966).

[39] *Fecunda ratis,* ed. Voigt, p. 1. The translation is mine.

[40] Paulus Beudel, *Qua ratione Graeci liberos docuerint, papyris, ostracis, tabulis in Aegypto inventis illustratur* (Monasterii Guestfalorum, 1911), pp. 34–37 and 51–56, and August Hausrath, "Das Problem der äsopischen Fabel," *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 1 (1898), 305–22 (here: pp. 312–14).

Quintilian noted the value of fables in weaning young children from the nursery tales to which they are exposed before entering grammar school:[41]

> Igitur Aesopi fabellas, quae fabulis nutricularum proxime succedunt, narrare sermone puro et nihil se supra modum extollente, deinde eandem gracilitatem stilo exigere condiscant: uersus primo soluere, mox mutatis uerbis interpretari, tum paraphrasi audacius uertere, qua et breuiare quaedam et exornare saluo modo poetae sensu permittitur. Quod opus, etiam consummatis professoribus difficile, qui commode tractauerit cuicumque discendo sufficiet.
>
> Therefore let pupils learn to paraphrase Aesop's fables, which follow closely upon the stories of the nursery, in plain and unexcessive language and thereafter to effect the same simplicity of style in writing. [Let them learn] to resolve metrical verses [into prose], next to convey its meaning while changing the words, and then to reshape it more freely in a paraphrase; in this it is permitted both to abridge and to elaborate, so long as the poet's meaning remains intact. This task is difficult even for polished instructors, and the person who handles it well will be qualified to learn anything.

To resort to the terminology in vogue today, both Quintilian and Egbert appreciated the advantages of appropriating "low culture" in the early stages of training children in the elements of "high culture."

But whatever he professed in the preface to Adalbold, Egbert obviously did not measure up to a folklore collector in the twentieth-century sense, and it would be wrongheaded to judge him so. Most important for our purposes, his terse telling in the *Puppis* of the story "De puella a lupellis seruata" is in a Latin verse form that bears no marks of an oral storytelling:[42]

De puella a lupellis seruata

Quod refero, mecum pagenses dicere norunt,
Et non tam mirum quam ualde est credere uerum:
Quidam suscepit sacro de fonte puellam,
Cui dedit et tunicam rubicundo uellere textam;
Quinquagesima sancta fuit babtismatis huius.
Sole sub exorto quinquennis facta puella
Progreditur, uagabunda sui inmemor atque pericli,
Quam lupus inuadens siluestria lustra petiuit
Et catulis predam tulit atque reliquit edendam.
Qui simul aggressi, cum iam lacerare nequirent,
Ceperunt mulcere caput feritate remota.
"Hanc tunicam, mures, nolite", infantula dixit,
"Scindere, quam dedit excipiens de fonte patrinus!"
Mitigat inmites animos deus, auctor eorum.

[41] *Institutio oratoria* 1.9.2–3, ed. M. Winterbottom, Oxford Classical Texts, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1970), 1:58, lines 1–9. The translation is mine.

[42] Egbert of Liège, *Fecunda ratis,* book 2 (*Puppis*), lines 472–85, ed. Voigt, pp. 232–33. I have changed Voigt's punctuation in four places, by replacing a full stop with a semicolon at the end of 475 and a comma with a full stop at the end of 476, by deleting a semicolon at the end of 477, and by adding a comma in 478; double quotation marks have been substituted for single ones. The translation is mine.

About a Girl Saved from Wolf Cubs

What I have to relate, countryfolk can tell along with me,
and it is not so much marvelous as it is quite true to believe.
A certain man took up a girl from the sacred font,
and gave her a tunic woven of red wool;
sacred Pentecost was [the day] of her baptism.
The girl, now five years old, goes out
at sunrise, footloose and heedless of her peril.
A wolf attacked her, went to its woodland lair,
took her as booty to its cubs, and left her to be eaten.
They approached her at once and, since they were unable to harm her,
began, free from all their ferocity, to caress her head.
"Do not damage this tunic, mice," the lisping little girl said,
"which my godfather gave me when he took me from the font!"
God, their creator, soothes untame souls.

The differences between Egbert's fourteen hexameters and an oral folktale are indisputable: Egbert's poem is written in the cramped style that typifies the *Fecunda ratis*,[43] whereas the folktale is oral; Egbert's poem constitutes a permanent lasting text, the folktale a one-time performance; Egbert's poem is for the classroom, the folktale for another sort of social occasion (and an occasion at which we cannot even hazard a guess). Thus when Egbert claims that countryfolk (*pagenses*) can tell the story along with him, he means at the very least in a different language and style. These are major mutata mutanda. But in spite of them, Egbert remains a folklore collector of the only sort who could have been encountered around the millennium — a male member of the literate class who, to indoctrinate youths, drew upon material that had currency among common people.

When evaluating any written text that purports to present a version of an oral tale, the reader must gauge the reliability of the sources and the treatment or use of them. Let us begin with the issue of authenticity. In the case of Egbert's "De puella a lupellis seruata" we have two grounds for judgment: Egbert's avowal to Adalbold in the preface that he used popular traditions and his profession in the first line of the poem that peasants told the same story. The latter statement admits, albeit obliquely, that Egbert owed a debt to popular sources.[44] Although it is possible that Egbert was lying in the first line of the poem, he would have gained nothing from his audience: he would have undermined his authority as a teacher, since the boys in his classroom would have known immediately if the story had not been popular.

The real issue is not authenticity but rather the sort of authenticity — not

[43] On Egbert's style, see Franz Brunhölzl and F. J. Worstbrock, "Egbert von Lüttich," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Kurt Ruh and others, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1978–), 2:361–63 (here: col. 362), and Maurice Hélin, *A History of Medieval Latin Literature*, 2nd ed., trans. Jean Chapman Snow (New York, 1949), pp. 61–62.

[44] At the risk of nitpicking it is worth observing that Egbert does not claim to have heard the story from peasants: pace Albert Wesselski, *Versuch einer Theorie des Märchens*, Prager Deutsche Studien 45 (Reichenberg i. B., 1931), p. 20. Rather, he asserts that both he and peasants know the story.

whether or not Egbert took from the peasants but *what* he took from them and did with it. For all his candor about sources, Egbert turns reticent when it comes to the modifications he introduced. Granted, he altered the style of any prior telling when he translated it into Latin. Did he make equally substantial changes in the content of the story? For want of any unadulterated "peasant version" this question cannot be answered fully; but we can say that he had to have been sufficiently faithful to the folktale for the story still to have been recognizable to his audience. For instance, we can infer that the "original" featured a little girl, for otherwise Egbert would have been free to make the protagonist a little boy — surely a casting that would have made sense for his male audience, if they had not known the story with a girl as the protagonist beforehand.

It is sometimes posited that the literary fairy tales written from the seventeenth and later centuries "not only obliterated the original folk perspective and reinterpreted the experience of the people for them but also endowed the contents with a new ideology."[45] If more than a half millennium earlier Egbert had imposed an ideology upon a folktale, the ideology would have been that of his literate ecclesiastic culture. In this case, Egbert's version would be an attempt, not to re-create an oral folktale in Latin, but rather to tease out a religiously useful message from the narrative. How easily a Christian ideology can be imprinted upon folktales can be seen in twentieth-century adaptations and interpretations of the Grimm version of "Little Red Riding Hood" by evangelical Christians and anthroposophists. For instance, in one short religious pamphlet the beginning of the story "is used to tell young children how to avoid the wolf, who is no longer the sexual seducer but rather the Devil himself. This short religious pamphlet seeks to point out the dangers of a lack of faith. From the original tale the children were supposed to learn to listen to their mother and to avoid the evil wolf, and it is an easy step to have the wolf represent the Devil and to teach that faith alone can overcome this dangerous enemy."[46]

Such interpretations jar on the ears of some twentieth-century academics. Thus, for instance, Dundes characterizes the anthroposophical interpretations as "one of the most curious sets of folktale interpretations of all those proposed" and accords little space to them, even in comparison with other interpretations with which he disagrees.[47] His resistance to religious interpretations of the tale is noteworthy for two reasons. One is that future generations might find readings generated in our own times just as quaint and dated as the Christian interpretations of earlier times. Is it more bizarre to construe the story as revealing the dangers of the devil than to follow Michel Foucault, who sees "Little Red Riding Hood" undergoing a "pedagogization of children's sex" as part of a two-century-long war against onanism, or Erich Fromm, who does not hesitate a moment in his Freudian

[45] Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, p. 8.

[46] Wolfgang Mieder, "Survival Forms of 'Little Red Riding Hood' in Modern Society," *International Folklore Review* 2 (1982), 23–40 (here: p. 36).

[47] Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook*, p. 208.

dissection of the story: "Most of the symbolism in this fairy tale can be understood without difficulty. The 'little cap of red velvet' is a symbol of menstruation. The little girl of whose adventures we hear has become a mature woman and is now confronted with the problem of sex"?[48] It seems fruitless to press these stories for one underlying meaning or to seek any one interpretation that will apply to all different versions of the story, since each telling can have its own meaning and can demand its own interpretation.

The other reason for taking note of Dundes's coolness toward religious interpretations is that it sheds light on the reluctance of folklorists to give Egbert's poem its due. There seems to be a tacit assumption that a fairy tale version with religious implications could not be "original," that a nonreligious folktale is presumably more truly "popular" than a religious one; for when the poem has been discussed, either it has been classed as a Christian legend and therefore unrelated to fairy tale, or else its Christian elements have been silently deleted, with ensuing damage to its integrity.

What is Christian in Egbert's poem? A first glimpse of Christianization would be in the second line, as Egbert protests that his story is a real miracle and not a fantasy. In the words of Hans Robert Jauss, "Das Wunderbare im mittelalterlichen Märchen vom 'Röttkäppchen' ist noch ganz an das Übernatürliche der christlichen Legende gebunden."[49] But it may be an exaggeration to call the marvelous in Egbert's poem "wholly bound to the supernatural of Christian legend," for in the very next line Egbert perhaps guides us into the indeterminacy of "once upon a time" with the pointed vagueness of the word "Quidam" ("A certain man"). Other less arguably Christian traits are the signaling of baptism in the third, fifth, and thirteenth lines, and the moralization in the fourteenth. The fourteenth can be omitted without damage to the story, although its excision would deprive the poem of its culminating ambiguity; for who is to say whether the untame souls are those of the wolves who menace the girl or those of the baptized, who are brought from an animal into a human state through the sacrament? Apart from the fourteenth, none of the lines in which baptism is mentioned overtly can be left out without harming the logic of the narrative. Thus the heart of the miraculous truth that Egbert discerns in the story is that no matter how young and helpless the person, no matter how fierce the danger, baptism has the power to protect. With such a message, the story would have made an ideal exemplum in preaching to persuade peasants to accept baptism for their young children. When Egbert wrote, churchmen were growing concerned over the souls of infants who died. Because they had not yet pro-

[48] Foucault, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners*, 1, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, 1978), p. 36 (quoted by Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations*, p. 16), and Fromm, *The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales and Myths* (New York, 1951), pp. 235–41 (here: p. 240).

[49] Hans Robert Jauss, *Untersuchungen zur mittelalterlichen Tierdichtung*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie 100 (Tübingen, 1959), p. 67. Compare p. 68: "Die Suche nach der 'einfachen Märchenforme' eines einheimischen 'Tiermärchens' führte zu der christlichen Legende. Inwieweit dieses Ergebnis für die Frage nach dem Wesen des mittelalterlichen Volksmärchens überhaupt kennzeichnend ist, kann hier nicht entschieden werden."

gressed to urging the baptism of newborns (canon law permitted the celebration of the sacrament only on the vigils of Easter and Pentecost, except to those in extremis), they must have felt pressure to convince peasants to bring their infants for baptism at the first possible Easter or Pentecost.[50] Whether or not the story ever served as an exemplum, the salience of such features as the godfather, baptism, baptismal gift, and Pentecost justify the experiment of reading it in Christian terms.

To date, Egbert's poem has been analyzed mainly in accordance with the principles of folklore motif studies to demonstrate whether or not it belongs to the same complex of stories as the later "Little Red Riding Hood." The story recounted by Perrault and Grimm was schematized first by folklorists as follows:

> 1. Wolf's Feast. (a) By masking as mother or grandmother, the wolf deceives and devours (b) a little girl (Red Riding Hood) whom he meets on his way to her grandmother's.
> 2. Rescue. (a) The wolf is cut open and his victims rescued alive; (b) his belly is sewed full of stones and he drowns; (c) he jumps to his death.[51]

A more detailed schema was elaborated by Marianne Rumpf, who saw the bare essentials of the story as being the gifts brought by the girl to the grandmother, the encounter with the wolf, the wolf at the grandmother's, the cannibalism, and the questions of the girl to the swallower (about the ears, eyes, nose, teeth, and mouth of the supposed "grandma").[52] Rumpf assigns to her two-page examination of Egbert's story the quizzical caption "Die Geschichte in der Fecunda ratis des Egbert von Lüttich, eine Urform des Rotkäppchen?"[53] On the basis of her analysis Rumpf maintains that Egbert's poem is most definitely not a medieval anticipation of "Little Red Riding Hood" (AT 333), since it lacks the constitutive cannibalistic motif (which is to say, the swallowing of the grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood by the wolf) and other essential motifs.

If Egbert's poem is not connected with "Little Red Riding Hood," then what is it? In one attempt to resolve the question, Rumpf relates the eleventh-century verses to stories about wolf children, of which an ancient example would be Romulus and Remus and a modern one Mowgli: a child who has been carried off by a wild animal grows up and is later saved.[54] The most important parallel in medieval Germanic tradition is Wolfdietrich, who received his name after being unharmed among wolves when he was an infant.[55]

[50] See Susan Ann Keefe, "Baptism," in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages,* ed. Strayer, 2 (New York, 1983), pp. 83–86 (here: p. 85).

[51] Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography,* rev. Stith Thompson, 2nd ed., Folklore Fellows Communications 3 (Helsinki, 1961), no. 333.

[52] Marianne Rumpf, *Rotkäppchen: Eine vergleichende Märchenuntersuchung,* Artes Populares: Studia Ethnographica et Folkloristica 17 (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), pp. 46–58.

[53] Rumpf, *Rotkäppchen,* pp. 66–67.

[54] She is followed by Hans Ritz, *Die Geschichte vom Rotkäppchen: Ursprünge, Analysen, Parodien eines Märchens* (Emstal, 1981), pp. 139–40.

[55] Wesselski, *Versuch,* p. 19, points out that in both Egbert's poem and the saga of Wolfdietrich God intervenes to calm the wolves and protect the child.

An analogue in medieval Irish tradition is the story of Cormac's birth.[56] In the language of Stith Thompson's motif index, Egbert's poem contains both B 777.1, "wild animal miraculously tamed," and D 1442.12, "magic garment tames animal." Furthermore, Rumpf sees the red clothing here as being foreign to the later story: here it must be understood in the context of Germanic werewolf stories, where it serves an apotropaic function. She does not conjecture whether this apotropaic quality of red is a literary device, a folk belief, or a scientifically observable effect.[57] Certainly red is not known to ward off animals such as bulls, although Vergil reported that hunters stretched cords with scarlet feathers (known as a "scare" — Latin *formido*) at the edges of woods so as to intimidate game as it tried to escape.[58]

The equation of Egbert's story to the Wolfdietrich legend and its congeners has a few flaws, the most striking of which is that Egbert gives no inkling the little girl stays in the woods to grow up among the wolves. Accounts of children who have been raised by female animals after being lost or abandoned by their human parents have abounded from antiquity to the present century. These accounts of feral children range from the purely fictional to the purportedly factual. At the factual end of the spectrum, the taxonomist Carl Linnaeus (1707–78) subsumed wolf children in the tenth edition of his *Systema naturae* (1758) as a subclass of *homo ferus:* the *Juvenis lupinus Hessianus.*[59] According to written reports that had been credited for centuries before Linnaeus, the wolf child of Hesse was found running wild in the woods in 1344. He was reputed to have lived for four years with wolves who had excavated a special burrow and outfitted it with leaves for him.[60] Even recently, serious scholars such as the psychologist Arnold Gesell have placed credence in the existence of wolf children, such as the child Kamala whose case received notoriety in the 1910s and 1920s.[61]

Although these cases of purported zoanthropy are fascinating, they seem irrelevant to "De puella a lupellis seruata." Egbert offers no more hint that the wolf in his story (which he presents as a *lupus* and not a *lupa!*) is a surrogate parent than that it is the typical greedy beast of fables, which was

[56] The most convenient account of both Wolfdietrich and Cormac remains Sophus Bugge, *The Home of the Eddic Poems, with Especial Reference to the Helgi-Lays,* 2nd ed., trans. William Henry Schofield (London, 1899), pp. 67–96.

[57] For an overview of different qualities that have been associated with red from ancient times through the present, see *Herder Lexikon Symbole,* 6th ed. (Freiburg, 1978), p. 135.

[58] Vergil, *Georgics* 3.372, "puniceaeue agitant pauidos formidine pennae" ("they [do not] hunt beasts frightened by the 'scare' of the crimson feather"), ed. R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford, 1969), p. 76; and *Aeneid* 12.750, "ceruum aut puniceae saeptum formidine pennae" ("[as when a hunting dog has caught] a stag hedged about by the 'scare' of the crimson feather"), p. 416.

[59] Robert M. Zingg, "Feral Man and Cases of Extreme Isolation of Individuals," in J. A. L. Singh and Robert M. Zingg, *Wolf-Children and Feral Man,* Contributions of the University of Denver 4 (New York, 1942), pp. 127–276 (here: p. 177).

[60] Lucien Malson, *Wolf Children* (London, 1972), p. 39.

[61] Arnold Gesell, *Wolf Child and Human Child: Being a Narrative Interpretation of the Life History of Kamala, the Wolf Girl* (New York, 1941). Wesselski, *Versuch,* p. 19, mentioned modern wolf children in connection with Egbert's poem.

standard fare in the elementary textbooks that Egbert's schoolboy audience would have known only too well, or of the later Reynard cycle, which may have been spreading through oral tradition already at this date. Egbert's wolf is in no wise anthropomorphized: it neither nurtures as a wolf mother does nor acts greedy and talks as a typical fabular wolf does.[62] If affinities may be detected between his beast and any conventional wolf, it is the wolf of Christian symbolism: the diabolic beast that would prey upon the faithful flock, were it not for the vigilance of both earthly pastors and the heavenly Good Shepherd. If one focuses on the situation rather than on the particular animal, an interesting analogue can be found in the account of Daniel in the lions' den: a believer is protected from usually voracious animals through the might of God.[63]

A general shortcoming in Rumpf's analysis is that it plays down the contribution of many elements to the distinctive nature of a story: not only narrative motifs, but also themes, settings, and characters, together with their attributes and the functions they serve. Despite a century of struggles toward a scientific narratology of folktales,[64] folktale analysts have not attained a universally applicable diagnostics for fixing the absolute minimum of constituents that endue a story of a given type with its distinctive imprint. The complex of features that lends a story its essence will vary from tale to tale, cultural milieu to cultural milieu. This variability does not render the process of analysis futile but it does recommend that analysts be flexible. If viewed less rigidly, Egbert's poem reveals such significant similarities to "Little Red Riding Hood" as the title character (a little girl with a red riding hood), the main prop (a red riding hood), the lead villain (a wolf), the climactic event (an improbable but safe escape from the lead villain when all seems lost), and two main themes (the dangers of the woods and of being eaten by wolves).

When the poem is seen as an organic whole, Rumpf's explanation of the red clothing as a werewolf repellent fails to satisfy. Although in the title Egbert (if he and not a scribe was responsible for the titles) identifies the heroine only as a little girl, within the poem the first attribute singled out is her tunic woven of red wool.[65] The hooded design of the garment in Egbert would have been more obvious if he had used the medieval Latin term *cappa* rather than opting for the classical and liturgical connotations of *tunica*.[66] The word *tunica* usually applied to a surcoat and specifically to a surcoat that

[62] Mariarosaria Pugliarello, *Le origini della favolistica classica* (Brescia, 1973).

[63] Dan. 6 and 14.30–42.

[64] The most famous publication to result from these struggles is Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott, rev. Louis A. Wagner, 2nd ed., Publications of the American Folklore Society, Bibliographical and Special Series 9; Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics 10 (Austin and London, 1968).

[65] All except for two of the titles, which appear only in the second book, were written by one hand: see *Fecunda ratis*, ed. Voigt, p. vi.

[66] This observation was made by Wesselski, *Versuch*, p. 19. The word *cappa* is Late Latin: see *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* (Leipzig, 1900–), 3:354, lines 23–36. It was employed in medieval Latin to designate various sorts of clothing, among which were the linen fabrics used to cover infants at baptism: see *Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch bis zum ausgehenden 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. Otto Prinz and others (Munich, 1960–), 2:238, lines 35–40.

was white, not necessarily a garment with a hood that could correspond to a little red riding hood;[67] but a close inspection of lines 11 and 12 leads to the conclusion that the tunic in Egbert's poem must have a hood: as the wolf cubs begin to nuzzle the girl's head, she warns them not to damage the tunic![68] In other words, the robe of the girl in Egbert must have been a hooded garment similar to the *coiffure* of her counterpart in Perrault and Grimm — the red hooded cape which the English "Little Red Riding Hood" was intended to translate.

Whatever import the cut of the robe had in Egbert's source or sources, he had specifically Christian reasons for stressing the hood. He took pains to convey the presence of the hood, since the covering of the head with a veil was an essential event in the baptismal liturgy with which he was concerned.[69] As this moment in the ceremony was explicated by the ninth-century liturgiologist Amalar of Metz, the covering extends the symbolism of the baptismal robe: it signifies the protection of the Lord that is secured through baptism:

> De tegumento capitis.
>
> Et hoc de veteri testamento adsumptum est. Sic enim scriptum est in Exodo: *Filios quoque illius,* quin Aaron, *applicabis, et indues tunicis lineis, cingesque balteo,* Aaron scilicet et liberos eius, *et inpones eis mitras.* Iam percepta gratia sacri baptismatis, non se confidat viribus suis, sed semper deprecetur, ut protectus sit Domini et caelesti auxilio. Protectionem Domini praeclaram volumus intellegere per linteum quo caput tegitur.[70]
>
> On the Covering of the Head
>
> This too derives from the Old Testament; for thus it is written in Exodus (29.8–9): "You shall bring his sons also" (that is to say, Aaron) "and shall dress them in linen tunics, and gird them (that is, Aaron and his children) with a sash, and put miters on them." Now when he has received the grace of sacred baptism, he should not rely on his own strength, but he should ever pray to be protected by the aid of God and heaven. We wish to understand the renowned protection of the Lord by the linen with which the head is covered.

The garments of the newly baptized, like those of saints and of the clergy, were sometimes felt in the early Middle Ages to possess magical properties against storms and fire.[71] In Egbert's story the efficacy of the baptismal symbol is such that the wolf cubs, having set out to devour their prey, are reduced

[67] See pseudo-Alcuin, *De divinis officiis* 38, in Migne, PL 101:1173–1286 (here: col. 1238BC), and Albert Blaise, *Le vocabulaire latin des principaux thèmes liturgiques* (Turnhout, 1966), p. 107.

[68] The first to conclude that the tunic was really a hooded cape was Rudolf Kögel, *Geschichte der deutschen Litteratur bis zum Ausgange des Mittelalters,* 1/2 (Strasbourg, 1897), p. 273. The only recent scholar even to mention the possible significance of these lines — albeit with considerable skepticism — has been Ritz, *Die Geschichte vom Rotkäppchen,* pp. 139–40.

[69] Joseph H. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, 1986), p. 302.

[70] Amalar of Metz, *Epistula Amalarii ad Carolum imperatorem de scrutinio et baptismo* 45, ed. Johann Michael Hanssens, *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia,* 1, Studi e Testi 138 (Vatican City, 1948), p. 247, lines 9–16. The translation is mine, with quotation of the English of *The Holy Bible: Douay Rheims Version* (Baltimore, 1899).

[71] See Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, 1991), pp. 187–88 and 190.

instead to performing the equivalent of another event in the baptismal liturgy, the anointment of the head.[72]

The title character of the "Little Red Riding Hood" story has grown so important that her name has become a common noun, one star in the bright constellation that numbers Cinderella and Bluebeard among its luminaries.[73] Why is the name so important? In part because anyone who remembers the story as it has reached us through the cultural tradition of Perrault, Tieck, and especially the Brothers Grimm remembers it with this chief character and eponymous title: so intimately linked are the two that merely hearing the title or name of the main character suffices to trigger memory of the whole tale.[74] But another part of the explanation is the hermeneutic pressure of a name that seems on an intuitive level to have a meaning, to offer a key that will unlock the true significance of the whole story. The redness emerges as the central mystery of the story, eliciting interpretations that shift with the intellectual vogues of the cultures that produce the interpreters. Thus in the nineteenth and early twentieth century the red was seen as encoding a solar myth,[75] whereas more recently it has been deciphered as referring to menarche or lasciviousness among young girls. As one critic put it, "Much ado has been made about her fetish of the red hood or cap. Clearly her innocence in the story has been suspect."[76]

Folklorists have been understandably impatient with the welter of wild speculation. In exasperation Paul Delarue compared the effects of the red hood on critics to those of the toreador's red cape on bulls: "Tel le taureau qui fonce sur la cape rouge que lui présente le toréador et s'acharne sur une enveloppe vide, les folkloristes se sont précipités sur cette coiffure rouge que leur offrait la version de Perrault. . . ."[77] He went on calmly to argue that far too much attention has been paid to the name and to the color it conveys. In the opinion of most folklorists who have occupied themselves with the story, the appearance in the story of this name — along with both the riding hood and the associated color — was a red herring, the result of Perrault's whimsy or fraudulence: "The independent oral versions present a remarkable identity from one extremity of the zone of extension of the tale to the other. They permit one to ascertain that the red headdress of the little girl is an accessory trait peculiar to the Perrault version, not a general trait on which one could base oneself to explain the tale."[78] According to this reason-

[72] Amalar, *Epistula de scrutinio et baptismo* 44, 1:247.

[73] Soriano, *Les contes de Perrault,* p. 13.

[74] Linda Dégh, "Grimm's 'Household Tales' and the Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic," *Western Folklore* 38 (1979), 83–103 (here: p. 102), and Mieder, "Survival Forms of 'Little Red Riding Hood,'" p. 35.

[75] Paul Saintyves [= Emile Nourry], *Les contes de Perrault et les récits parallèles* (Paris, 1923), pp. 215–29. For references to other solar explanations, see Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations,* p. 59, n. 1.

[76] Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations,* p. 1.

[77] Delarue, "Les contes merveilleux de Perrault," p. 251.

[78] Paul Delarue, "The Story of Grandmother," in Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook,* p. 18. Delarue's view has been accepted almost universally by folklorists: Dundes, *Little Red*

ing, Perrault noticed that folktales were sometimes named after the garments that characters wore, and he decided on this basis to endow his story — his fakelore — with the air of real folklore by introducing the cap or riding hood. Others have supplemented Delarue's argument with the intimation that Perrault made the hood red because the color "was generally associated at the time with sin, sensuality, and the devil."[79]

The contention that folktales and characters in them were now and then named after features of their clothing is well founded. One pertinent example of both processes can be seen in "Rǫgnvalds þáttr ok Rauðs" ("The Tale of Rognvald and Raud"), an Old Norse short story (*þáttr*) in the *Flateyjarbók* in which a foundling (originally named Gunnarr) who has been abandoned by his father is adopted by a childless old couple who call him Raud — red — after the color of the tunic (*kyrtill*) in which he is dressed; interestingly, this tale shares with Egbert's "De puella a lupellis seruata" a baptismal theme, since it ends in the baptism and reconciliation of Raud and Rognvald.[80] In such stories as this the garment serves as a token to establish the royalty of the abandoned child.[81] The Middle English *Lay Le Freine,* a Breton lay from the beginning of the fourteenth century, states explicitly that the clothing in which the abandoned heroine is lapped was meant to guarantee that "whoso hir founde schuld have in mende/That it [the child] were comen of riche kende."[82] The coverlet serves at a crucial moment to identify the abandoned daughter to her mother.

Delarue conceded that the redness of the tunic in Egbert and of the riding hood in Perrault lent the two stories about little girls and wolves a similarity, but he saw it as being superficial and coincidental: "S'il est aussi question d'une fillette et d'un loup dans cette histoire, qui est présentée comme le récit d'un événement réel qu'auraient rapporté des paysans, il est difficile d'y voir une version ou la forme première de notre conte. Sans doute, la robe de la fillette est-elle rouge, comme la coiffure de l'héroïne dans la version de Perrault. Mais le 'chaperon rouge' n'est qu'un trait accessoire, particulier à

Riding Hood: A Casebook, p. 14; Soriano, *Les contes de Perrault,* pp. 160 and 178; and Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations,* p. 6.

[79] Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations,* p. 9.

[80] On this short story, see Joseph Harris, "Folktale and Thattr: The Case of *Rognvald and Raud,*" *Folklore Forum* 13 (1980), 158–98. Harris generously made available to me a typescript translation of "The Tale of Rognvald and Raud."

[81] This point was made by Harris, "Folktale and Thattr," p. 171: "The abandoned child is often identified by his rescuer as royal through S334 Tokens of royalty (nobility) left with exposed child."

[82] Lines 143–44, in *Middle English Verse Romances,* ed. Donald B. Sands (New York, 1966), p. 238. Although this lay shares a few features with "Little Red Riding Hood," it differs in at least two major ways: Freine acquires her name, not from the cloth, but from the ash tree in which she was found; and Freine is christened, not before, but after her abandonment. The Middle English poem is based on Marie de France's *Fresne,* the only *lai* in her collection to take its title from the name of the heroine: *Fresne* 121–34, in *Les lais de Marie de France,* ed. Jean Rychner, Classiques Français du Moyen Age 93 (Paris, 1973), p. 48. The motif was borrowed from Marie by Jean Renart, *Galeran de Bretagne,* ed. Lucien Foulet, Classiques Français du Moyen Age 37 (Paris, 1925).

cette version, non un trait général du conte. . . ."[83] Rumpf echoed this conclusion: "Es erscheint mir gewagt, nur aus der Tatsache, daß in der einen Geschichte aus dem 12. Jahrhundert [*sic*] eine rote Tunica als Patengeschenk an ein kleines Mädchen eine Rolle spielt, auf Zusammenhänge mit dem Rotkäppchenmärchen zur schließen."[84] Going his own direction as usual, Wesselski refused to dismiss the resemblances; but even he understated the points of contact between the two stories: "In den Märchen ist also von der Geschichte — Zwischenglieder haben ja wohl bestanden — außer dem Wolf nichts übrig geblieben als die Erinnerung an die rote Cappa, der eine Zug, der weder in der Geschichte noch in den Märchen eine motivische Bedeutung hat, gleichwohl aber die Namen Chaperon rouge und Rotkäppchen rechtfertigt. . . ."[85]

Delarue and most other folklorists who have occupied themselves with Perrault's tale have assumed it to be a literary bowdlerization of one "original oral tale." According to this thinking, Perrault departed from his oral sources and drew the detail of the red riding hood out of thin air.[86] But must we accept that the folktale tradition behind Perrault was so clear and uniform? Must we expect a story to retain complete stability over hundreds of years? Is there not a paradox or an irony that folktales can be so immutable that an oral tradition recorded in 1885 is more faithful to the tradition than a written version recorded nearly two hundred years earlier, but that a folktale known to cleric and peasant alike in 1022 should disappear without a trace? Although faith in stability is one of the premises of the Finnish method,[87] Friedrich von der Leyen argued long ago that "We cannot always get to the original of these motifs, for many of them have changed greatly. Kaleidoscopic variation takes place in the course of migration."[88] Wesselski went even further in hypothesizing that the oral tradition had no stability except in the proximity of a written text.[89] Indeed, even Dundes declares that "Variation is a key concept in folkloristics. It is variation that in part distinguishes folklore from so-called 'high culture' and 'mass culture.'"[90]

The hypothesis that the story as we know it originated fully formed, a kind of narrative Athena that surged mature from the head of its creators, must be balanced against the possibility that elements from two or more different stories fused over time. Thus an alternative hypothesis is that "Little Red Riding Hood" was born through both cultural changes and modifications

[83] Delarue, "Les contes merveilleux de Perrault," p. 227.

[84] Rumpf, *Rotkäppchen*, p. 67.

[85] Wesselski, *Versuch*, p. 20.

[86] Rumpf, *Rotkäppchen*, p. 67: "Woher Perrault den Namen Rotkäppchen hat, konnte bisher nicht festgestellt werden."

[87] Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories*, pp. 53–55. It would be worthwhile to investigate how overtly the insistence on stability was expressed as an attempt to put folktale studies on a footing with other "sciences" — to enable the establishment of folktale stemmas comparable to textual stemmas in philology.

[88] Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories*, p. 15.

[89] Wesselski, *Versuch*, pp. 153–57.

[90] Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook*, p. 193.

introduced by storytellers. It is conceivable that the apotropaic power of the girl's dress — and the dress could have been apotropaic for one reason in popular tellings (red to ward off wolves) and for another in Egbert's account (red to symbolize the salvific capacity of Pentecost and baptism) — was forgotten. Even if it lost its apotropaic power, the red hood could have persisted in the story because of its capacity as a storytelling device to attract the attention of children. In literature, as in stoplights and clothing, red catches the eye and is felt to warn and protect.[91] The motif of the red hood would have constituted a truly unbroken thread in the history of the narrative or, to press into service Goethe's well-known phrase, *ein roter Faden.*[92] But if the red no longer functioned to protect the girl, the storytellers would have been forced to improvise other means of saving their little heroine — unless they were content, as Perrault was, to watch her become wolf food. Under this impetus the Grimm brothers, their informants, or the tradition behind them could have conflated two stories, one about a red-garbed girl who was carried off by a wolf but later saved from the beast thanks to her clothing and another about a girl either devoured by a wolf or else released from it by a male agent. In other words, the character of Little Red Riding Hood in a tale akin to Egbert's could have been attracted toward another story with a wolf but without a function for the hood. If this conflation took place, then one of the results could have been the fairy tale of "Little Red Riding Hood" as we have it: a prop that was a constitutive element in one story became a frustrating mystery in another.

Before rejecting the idea that Egbert's poem is only one of two or more stories that combined eventually to form "Little Red Riding Hood," we should recall that folklorists have argued for cognate relationships between other equally dissimilar pairs of folktales. To take an example close to home, it is widely agreed that the Grimm version of "Little Red Riding Hood" grafts an ending from the tale type The Wolf and the Kids (Grimm, *KHM,* no. 5; AT 123) onto roots of the tale type The Glutton/Red Riding Hood/The Six Little Goats (AT 333). If elements from two different tale types can merge so easily and successfully, then why should we rule out that elements from other lost tale types — such as The Red-Garbed Girl and The Girl Swallowed by Wolf — coalesced over time?[93] There can be no doubt that much medieval popular literature perished, sometimes surviving only in a brief title or allusion but sometimes not even receiving such fragmentary immortality.[94]

[91] See Joachim Knuf, *Unsere Welt der Farben: Symbole zwischen Natur und Kultur* (Cologne, 1988), chap. 3: "Rot: Vom Nutzen einer Farbe," pp. 48–83 (especially "Das Warnsignal am Anfang aller Kultur," pp. 81–83), and Rudolf Gross, *Warum die Liebe rot ist: Farbsymbolik im Wandel der Jahrtausende* (Düsseldorf and Vienna, 1981), p. 79 ("Das Problem der sexuellen Drohung"): "So sind die 'Neidfleckerln,' die überall dort angewendet werden, wo man am Mensch und Tier bangt, rot: auf den Kleidern der Kinder, am Brautwagen, am Pferdegeschirr."

[92] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809), part 2, chap. 2.

[93] Bolte and Polívka, *Anmerkungen,* 1:234 (stating that the conclusion of "Rotkäppchen" derives from AT 123); Dundes, pp. 202–3 (assuming that "AT 123 and AT 333 are probably cognates, possibly subtypes of the same general tale type"); and Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations,* p. 15 (stating that "the Grimms borrowed a motif from the folk tale *The Wolf and the Seven Kids*").

[94] See R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England,* 2nd ed. (London, 1970).

To extend this alternative hypothesis, the detail of the redness can be shown to have had a special significance in Egbert's version — and a significance that could easily have sunk into oblivion over the centuries between Egbert and Perrault. Here it is worthwhile pondering Egbert's insistence on Pentecost, which he touches upon in the fifth line (and it is not irrelevant that five is *quinque* in Latin!) and stresses through a sonic architecture of *quod, quam, quidam,* and *cui* that culminates in the alliteration of *quinquagesima* with *quinquennis:* through her age, the girl almost embodies the day which is the fiftieth after Easter. Those of us who are acquainted with British English associate this holiday with the color white: the name Whitsunday ("White Sunday") recalls the custom of clothing the newly baptized in white baptismal robes on this day.[95] To be sure, the white baptismal robes must have been a frequent sight on Pentecost, since except in cases of emergency baptism could take place only in the two seasons of Easter and Pentecost.[96] But in most of the Middle Ages the predominant liturgical color of the day would have equally justified the name "Red Sunday," since there were many symbolic reminders that Pentecost began with the tongues of red fire which appeared to the apostles (Acts 2.3): "red rose leaves were scattered from the roof of the church";[97] the Gospel book was covered in red, to signify the blood of Christ;[98] and, most important, the vestments for that day were red.[99] Thus the red of the surcoat conveys the power of a Pentecostal baptism, as embodied in a red-clothed celebrant. Finally, it bears noting that the *rubicunda tunica* in Egbert's poem does not rule out a white baptismal garment: the red surcoat that the girl was given after being taken from the font could have been placed over the customary white garb of a candidate for baptism.

Whether or not the common people of Egbert's day — the peasants — recounted a girl-and-wolf story in which the liturgical color and baptisms of Pentecost figured prominently is beyond our ken. It is conceivable that Egbert, the cleric, Christianized a nonreligious story of a little girl in a red garment who was rescued miraculously from being devoured by a wolf: aware

[95] On the white chrismal robe of the newly baptized, see Rabanus Maurus, *De clericorum institutione* 1.29, ed. Migne, PL 107:293–420 (here: col. 313C); *Missale Gothicum* 263, trans. Edward C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy,* 2nd ed., Alcuin Club Collections 42 (London, 1970), p. 162; *Bobbio Missal* 250, trans. Whitaker, *Baptismal Liturgy,* p. 212; *Stowe Missal* 33, trans. Whitaker, *Baptismal Liturgy,* p. 220; *Sarum Rite,* trans. Whitaker, *Baptismal Liturgy,* p. 247; and Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship,* pp. 103, 109, 293, 302, and 304.

[96] On the restriction of baptism to Easter and Pentecost, see John D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West. A Study in the Disintegration of the Primitive Rite of Initiation,* Alcuin Club Collections 47 (London, 1965), pp. 52, 58; and Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship,* pp. 295–96.

[97] Raymond Deloy Jameson, "Whitsunday," in *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend,* ed. Maria Leach and Jerome Fried (San Francisco, 1949), pp. 1175–76 (here: p. 1175).

[98] St. Germanus of Paris, *The Second Letter,* trans. Whitaker, *Baptismal Liturgy,* pp. 164–65.

[99] Innocent III, *De sacro altaris mysterio* 1.65, "De quatuor coloribus principalibus, quibus secundum proprietates dierum vestes sunt distinguendae," ed. Migne, PL 217:799–802 (here: col. 801AB); William Durandus, *Rationale* 3.18.4 (Naples, 1859), p. 130; and Heide Nixdorff and Heidi Müller, *Weisse Westen, rote Roben: Von den Farbordnungen des Mittelalters zum individuellen Farbgeschmack* (Berlin, 1983), pp. 45–53 ("Liturgische Farben," especially pp. 45–46).

that the redness of the garment was too familiar an element in his sources to allow for its omission, he made a virtue of a necessity by coordinating the color with the symbolism of the liturgy. If Christian features were imposed by Egbert in this fashion, then his raw material could have been a story much closer to the Perrault and Grimm versions. For instance, Egbert could have deliberately expurgated for children a story with strong sexual implications: he could have made an originally pubescent or adolescent heroine very young (even in times of precocious sexual maturation the adjective *quinquennis* and the noun *infantula* place her securely in childhood); he could have replaced the menstrual associations of red with the religious symbolism of Pentecost; and he could have protected the girl from the sexual implications of being eaten by a wolf ("elle a vu le loup!") by having her set free earlier in the story.[100] Yet had Egbert made such thoroughgoing changes in the oral tradition, would he still have dared tell his young charges that peasants could tell the story along with him?

Wherever the credit is due, the device of the red hood is integrated smoothly into the story through the color symbolism. In the scene that Egbert stages, the little girl is protected miraculously from the wolves directly through the virtue of her tunic. The red tunic, which brackets the narrative (lines 4 and 12) as effectively as it clothes the little girl, can safeguard her precisely because of the liturgical context in which it is bestowed upon her: on Pentecost as a baptismal gift from her godfather. The baptismal rites buffer the girl from the wolves within the story, just as in figurative terms they shield any Christian from the violence of the infernal wolf, the devil. Even the motif of the head caressing or licking could belong in the same liturgical nexus, since the unction of baptismal candidates on the head with chrism was believed to convey the gift of the Holy Spirit — the gift of tongues![101]

As in Perrault, the red riding hood embodies the affection of a relative for the little girl. Here too we may speculate about an alteration in the tale through cultural changes over hundreds of years. In the Middle Ages the relationship of godfather and godchild was one of the strongest forms of kinship. At baptism the parents and godparents were directed to protect the child from fire, water, and all other dangers until the age of seven years. Furthermore, the godparents were enjoined to take part actively in the religious education of the godchild.[102] Finally, they usually gave the godchildren gifts at baptism — not just money, as is sometimes believed, but also jewelry, livestock, and clothing such as dresses.[103] Before the mid-eleventh century the level of technology in Western Europe restricted the spectrum of principal colors to variations upon white, black, and red. (The fact that dyeing was

[100] Soriano, *Les contes de Perrault,* p. 442.

[101] After the baptism a presbyter anointed the candidates' heads with chrism: Fisher, *Christian Initiation,* p. 17. In the early history of baptism the unction was not seen to be related to the giving of the Holy Spirit: Fisher, *Christian Initiation,* pp. 18–19. But later it was believed to convey the gift of the Holy Spirit: Fisher, *Christian Initiation,* pp. 38, 45, 53–54, 56, and 63–65.

[102] Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship,* pp. 285–86 and 305–32.

[103] Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship,* p. 51.

limited to shades of red is preserved in the use of the English noun and verb "color" to refer to red in the face and in the common application of the Spanish *colorado* to designate red in general.)[104] Of these principal colors, red may have been the most appropriate for a baptismal gift, not because it was the preferred color for the female sex (the system of allocating pink to one gender and blue to the other had not yet developed), but because it was a luxurious color that suggested through its very tint the special generosity and affection of its giver.[105]

In many later times and places the relationship between godparent and godchild has grown ever less important than it was in medieval Western Europe.[106] Therefore the prominence of the godfather — who is the first and last person mentioned in Egbert's poem, who has no identity (*quidam*) until after he has performed his godfatherly function of taking his godchild from the font (as is stressed in both lines 3 and 13), and who as godfather exercises the same power over the wolves (10–13) as God the Father and Creator does over souls (14) — could have been baffling in some societies. Once the reason for the inclusion of the godfather was no longer understood, the giver of the robe — now no longer comprehensible as a baptismal gift — was replaced by a close relative who could have produced such an item — namely, a grandmother. This process would have been hastened if oral storytelling was shifting from a particular social class — peasants — back to a particular sex and age group. After an interlude in the Middle Ages when folktales and proverbs were attributed to the social class of peasants, the old women struck back: the old women and nurses who had told *fabulae aniles* in antiquity endured to relate old wives' tales and Mother Goose rhymes in the early modern period — and to enhance the roles of characters like themselves in the stories they told.[107]

But the rise of the grandmother meant that the godfather was only displaced or disguised, not completely removed. Because the robe was no longer hallowed by baptism and Pentecost, the male figure who lurked in the background of Egbert's version was drafted for active service in the Grimm tale and its analogues: if the red riding hood could not control the wolf, the woodcutter could. Consequently, both stories would contain the two opposite forms of male nature that Freudian interpreters such as Bruno Bettelheim single out: the dangerous seducer (wolf), who represents the id, and the salvational father figure (godfather/hunter), who stands for the ego.[108] Such a psychological construction would have been foreign to Egbert, for whom the rite of baptism — and through it, God — outweighed in importance any

[104] See Michel Pastoureau, *Couleurs, images, symboles: Etudes d'histoire et d'anthropologie* (Paris, 1989), pp. 20 and 22 ("L'héritage antique: blanc, rouge, noir").

[105] See Nixdorff and Müller, *Weisse Westen, rote Roben,* pp. 137–40 ("Rosa und Hellblau in der Säuglingskleidung").

[106] Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship,* p. 49.

[107] Here I extend an observation made concerning proverbs by Gaston Paris, in his review of *Fecunda ratis,* ed. Voigt, *Journal des savants* (1890), pp. 559–72 (here: p. 562, n. 1).

[108] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York, 1974), pp. 166–83.

human agent in the poem. To him the marvelous truth was not the godfather, but the salvational power of baptism.

With the woodcutter we are nearly out of the woods, but we still need to discuss the woods themselves. Perrault's version and most of its relatives are usually classified among cautionary tales, designated formally by the German terms *Schreckmärchen* or *Warnmärchen*[109] or the French *un récit de mise en garde.*[110] Among these tales, Perrault's version is unusual in having a bad ending:[111] the wolf leaps upon Little Red Riding Hood and gobbles her up. This conclusion brings home in particularly brutal form the general danger of being disobedient and careless,[112] alongside the specific one of going out alone in woods.[113] Egbert's tale also shows traces of being admonitory: the girl is snatched when she is "wandering heedless of her peril," apparently near the woods and during the half-light of dawn — the place and time in which wolves were reputed to pose the gravest threat to human beings.[114] But Egbert's tale hews more closely to the usual line of *Warnmärchen* in that it concludes happily. In this way Egbert's poem, like the Grimm version of "Little Red Riding Hood," appears designed to win over its audience of schoolchildren by presenting as principal character a child who seems to have a God-given right to be protected.[115]

At the risk of drawing an invidious comparison, Egbert's ending could be said to surpass Perrault's in both its attention to child psychology and its economy. To start with the issue of child psychology, Egbert's ending warns children *and* offers religious instruction, but not at the price of frightening children out of their wits. Whereas Perrault's tale closes disturbingly with both the girl and her grandmother entombed within the belly of the wolf,

[109] See Rumpf, *Rotkäppchen,* pp. 99–103 (on the meaning of the tale as a *Warnerzählung*). On the rise of such stories for children, see Gottfried Henssen, "Deutsche Schreckmärchen und ihre europäischen Anverwandten," *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 51 (1953), 84–97, and Marianne Rumpf, "Ursprung und Entstehung von Warn- und Schreckmärchen," *Folklore Fellows Communications* 160 (1955), 3–16.

[110] Soriano, *Les contes de Perrault,* p. 340.

[111] Soriano, *Les contes de Perrault,* p. 150.

[112] Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations,* p. 1: "But whatever her reputations and destiny, she has always been used as a warning to children, particularly girls, a symbol and embodiment of what might happen if they are disobedient and careless."

[113] Soriano, *Les contes de Perrault,* p. 151. For an attempt to establish a typology of forest symbolism in medieval literature, see Paolo Golinelli, "Tra realtà e metafora: Il bosco nell'immaginario letterario medievale," in *Il bosco nel medioevo,* ed. Bruno Andreolli and Massimo Montanari, Biblioteca di Storia Agraria Medievale 4 (Bologna, 1988), pp. 97–123. The notion of the woods as a magic realm in which miracles occur seems more relevant to the Grimm version than to either Egbert or Perrault: see Hedwig von Beit, *Symbolik des Märchens: Versuch einer Deutung,* 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Bern, 1952–57), 1:46–47.

[114] Barry Holstun Lopez, *Of Wolves and Men* (New York, 1978), pp. 209–10.

[115] Max Lüthi, *Once upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales,* trans. Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald (Bloomington, 1976), p. 63, classifies "Little Red Riding Hood" as "one of a group of children's fairy tales, so called because children are the principal characters in them," and adds, "A child has a natural right to be protected and cared for. It is said of Little Red Riding Hood that everyone who saw her liked her, and that grandmother 'simply couldn't think of anything else she might give the child.'"

the story part of Egbert's poem finishes on the lightest of notes, as the little girl either honestly mistakes the wolf cubs for mice because of their small size and unwolfishly gentle ways or else teases them by calling them mice when she knows full well that they are actually wolves.[116] Whatever the explanation, the girl is faced with progressively less menacing creatures: the wolf (*lupus*) gives way to the diminutive whelps (*catuli*), which in turn are scaled down to mice (*mures*). Her own smallness and helplessness are communicated in the choice of the word *infantula,* rather than the earlier *puella,* to describe her.[117] It is easy to imagine this imperative to the young wolves, so effective in its reduction of savage beasts to almost cuddly harmlessness and timidity, as the final grace note in an oral folktale. As for the economy, unlike the outcome of either Perrault's or Grimm's versions, that of Egbert's story is linked directly to the name of the character, and the setting of the conclusion in a woodland den of wolves is well suited to a cautionary message about the forest and wolves.[118]

The economy of Egbert's version is perfect: every prop is indispensable and has a meaning. For this reason, if one subscribed to the debatable hypothesis that the original forms of folktales are usually the most logical or coherent,[119] one could build a plausible case that his "De puella a lupellis seruata" represents a truly original — or a more nearly original — version of one "Little Red Riding Hood" story. In this prototype the celebrated garment — the little red riding hood — plays a role more important than simply distinguishing the central character. With how many other Ur-"Little Red Riding Hoods" it amalgamated, and over how long a span of time before becoming AT 333, cannot be said.

This reading of Egbert's poem has been too speculative to settle all questions about the medieval background of "Little Red Riding Hood" to everyone's satisfaction, for it is just as true now as it was in 1947 that "the war of the folklorists goes on, with no immediate settlement in sight."[120] But it will have fulfilled its main purpose if it has shaken some widespread complacencies about the worth or worthlessness of written evidence in general and about the origins of "Little Red Riding Hood" in particular. At the least it has itself acted as a cautionary tale against the deep pitfall of limiting research only to demonstrably oral literature without taking stock of evidence from earlier times and from written literature. The creed that purely oral versions (which are de facto modern versions) have an intrinsic claim to priority over written versions (whether medieval or nineteenth century) is untenable. Too few folklorists acknowledge the urgency of locating and holding onto written

[116] Perhaps the wolves are called mice because mice would be the pests — as the etymology of the word "rodent" indicates — most likely to *gnaw* at garments.

[117] The theme of God's mercy to helpless females is sustained in "De lamentis uiduę," the seven-line selection with which Egbert follows this one in the *Puppis* (lines 486–92, ed. Voigt, p. 233).

[118] For a tabulation of the settings used in different versions of "Little Red Riding Hood," see Rumpf, *Rotkäppchen,* pp. 59–60.

[119] Von Sydow points out the dangers of this hypothesis: "Folktale Studies," p. 233.

[120] Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories,* p. 75.

evidence because it records otherwise irretrievable folklore;[121] and too few bear in mind the principle that Walter Anderson claimed to have enunciated to Kaarle Krohn in 1911: "Every *Märchen* investigator must also be one of literary history."[122] Just as medieval literary scholars would be unwise to shun the methods of the social sciences when serviceable, so folklorists would be foolhardy to convince themselves that they could routinely dispense with the fruits of philology, such as written evidence gathered from earlier cultures. Both philology and folkloristics stand to lose if the two fields are encouraged to drift further apart. As C. W. von Sydow observed acutely, ". . . it is evident that collaboration between philology and the study of folklore is of supreme importance. Philologists can produce much material of very great value to folklore research. . . . But the oral material is no less important for placing the contents of the ancient sources in the living whole to which they belong, and for supplementing their statements, which are often both fragmentary and otherwise corrupted."[123] Literary folklorism has its limitations but also its values.

Older written versions can be as helpful as newer oral versions in interpreting folktales and in graphing their trajectories across time. In this case, a little piece of medieval Latin literature that was unearthed more than a century ago has not been exploited by folklorists as it should have been. An eleventh-century poem raises the possibility that Perrault did not invent out of whole cloth either the garment or the character Little Red Riding Hood, whatever his other tamperings with the story may have been. The poem could be testimony that AT 333 was anticipated by more than one proto-AT 333, all of which except this one went unrecorded until Perrault. If so, it should not be regarded as *the* ancestor of Perrault, but it should be registered somewhere on the family tree.

This analysis of "De puella a lupellis seruata" suggests that if you dismiss the very character and title "Little Red Riding Hood" as hopelessly tainted interventions by literate authors, ignore all early Western written evidence, and define the original tale on the basis of later non-Western material, then you lose a lot. If in examining "Little Red Riding Hood," you exclude European literary versions and reduce the tale to a set of narrative motifs that recur in tales throughout the world, then you lose even more. It may be that in 36 percent of the variants the name Red Riding Hood is lacking;[124] but if you take the Red Riding Hood out of "Little Red Riding Hood," what you have left is quite obvious: Little.

[121] Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories,* p. 59: here I coincide with Krohn's statements in his review of Wesselski.

[122] Kiefer, *Recent Folktale Theories,* p. 62.

[123] Von Sydow, "Folktale Studies," p. 241.

[124] Rumpf, *Rotkäppchen,* p. 67.

Jan M. Ziolkowski is Professor of Medieval Latin and Comparative Literature at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138.